Worrying over Straw:

Or, Missing out on life with God

Exodus 5:1 – 6:1

The story involves four characters who live in a maze: the mice Scurry and Sniff, and two 'littlepeople', Hem and Haw. All is going well because they have found a huge source of their favourite food, cheese. Hem and Haw have even moved their houses to be near it and it has becomes the center of their lives. But they do not notice that it is getting smaller, and are devastated when they arrive at the site one morning and find the cheese is gone.

This is where the story splits in two. Scurry and Sniff quickly accept the loss of the cheese and go off into the maze in search of other sources. The littlepeople, because they have built their lives around the big cheese, feel they are the victim of some kind of fraud or theft. Yet this only makes things worse, as their clinging on ensures that they go hungry. Meanwhile, the mice move on and find new cheese.

The fable captures well that moment after we have lost a job or a relationship and we believe it is the end of the world. All the good things were in the previous situation, and all the future holds is fear. Yet Johnson's message is, instead of seeing change as the end of something, we must learn to see it as a beginning. We have all been told this, but sometimes motivation is lacking. To make himself accept reality, Haw writes this on the wall of the maze: "If you do not change, you can become extinct."

**A Difference of Desire vs. 1-5**

The Desire of God is for his children to find rest

 *A festival in Scripture is a time for rest, rejoicing, and reverence*

The Desire of the Accuser is for overwhelming occupation

**The Goal of the Accuser**

*To take the mind of the people (us) off their Lord and to focus on their problems.*

**It is intentional – vs. 6-9**

Pharaoh is a type of Satan. He plays the role of slave master. He also chooses to mock the children of God. This sounds eerily similar to Satan in his conversation with God about Job; he only praises you because everything is good.

 Work can and will keep us from a correct focus on God

***Are you amazed still that the standards of wealth are constantly changing in our country?*** *My brother in the last election made the observation that many who were upset about our economic situation would be considered by almost any standard in history and yet there is anxiety that true wealth has passed many of us by.*

**It is personal – vs. 10-14**

Satan seeks to destroy and overwhelm our lives – and he seeks to do so personally. We all receive bills monthly but the choices and circumstances that lead to those bills are each very personal in nature.

 Busyness, even in survival mode, makes our life about us

***The pain that these men felt was not a hypothetical pain. They were actually beaten.*** *Our pain can be just as real and please understand this is a ploy and tactic of the Accuser.*

***The Accuser has no interest in making things fair – and they were never fair – ever.***

**The Results of the Accuser**

**It is degrading – vs. 15-19**

The Accuser will ensure that you feel as if you do not measure up.

 *Other moms do more for their kids.*

 *Other dads have less stress*

 *I don’t want my child to miss what their friends are experiencing*

 *I don’t want my grandkids to feel left out*

I wonder what might have happened here if the Israelites had just refused to go to work that day. Sure, many of them would have been beaten and some might have even lost their lives, but had they not gone to work I believe that they would have kept a greater dependence upon the God of Abraham.

*Friends, this is not to make us feel bad, but rather to allow us to call these attacks what they are – the work of the Accuser*

*When is the last time that you had a thought or concern that you were willing to identify as the work of the Accuser?*

**It is persuasive – vs. 20-21**

Anger, a byproduct of the work of the Accuser, leaves us making unrealistic demands on others.

*In other words, we become instruments of the Accuser as we seek to ensure that others join us in our suffering. Now I do this as well and many times we will use cultural phrases to keep from having to explain ourselves, but think of how many times we respond to someone asking how we are by simply saying; busy, and then we want them to join us and feel our pain or at least feel embarrassed that they are not as busy as us.*

We lose our perspective. Slaves are slaves and yet the Israelite leaders use this distraction to put the onus on Moses and Aaron.

**The Desire of the Father**

 **Cast all of your cares upon me – vs. 22-23**

Clarity in prayer is a reality when we know the One to whom we pray

*Moses pulled no punches, he spoke clearly to God, because He was his God.*

**To be our hope – vs. 6:1**

He will reply

 He will provide

 He is able

***Jesus’ Display – Mark 7:24-30***

A woman with a great need and a God of Great compassion

Her need was not met because of her worthiness; in fact, the opposite is quite true

 His work will be done but Jesus is always curious of our faith

*By the way, it’s not faith unless you’re walking where you cannot see. This woman is in a Jewish home requesting help from a Jewish Rabbi. Folks, she is walking where she cannot see.*

Her total dependence upon God is a marked contrast from the Israelite leaders who thought their life was going to moderately improve with some bundles of straw.

 *When you need God to move, you need God to move*

His grace is always where our hope finds a home

***Your father knows that you have need of these things***

 Later, Moses and Aaron went in and said to Pharaoh, “This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: Let My people go, so that they may hold a festival for Me in the wilderness.”
But Pharaoh responded, “Who is Yahweh that I should obey Him by letting Israel go? I do not know anything about Yahweh, and besides, I will not let Israel go.”
Then they answered, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go on a three-day trip into the wilderness so that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God, or else He may strike us with plague or sword.”
The king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why are you causing the people to neglect their work? Get to your work!” Pharaoh also said, “Look, the people of the land are so numerous, and you would stop them from working.”
Further Oppression of Israel
That day Pharaoh commanded the overseers of the people as well as their foremen: “Don’t continue to supply the people with straw for making bricks, as before. They must go and gather straw for themselves. But require the same quota of bricks from them as they were making before; do not reduce it. For they are slackers — that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ Impose heavier work on the men. Then they will be occupied with it and not pay attention to deceptive words.”
So the overseers and foremen of the people went out and said to them, “This is what Pharaoh says: ‘I am not giving you straw. Go get straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but there will be no reduction at all in your workload.’” So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. The overseers insisted, “Finish your assigned work each day, just as you did when straw was provided.” Then the Israelite foremen, whom Pharaoh’s slave drivers had set over the people, were beaten and asked, “Why haven’t you finished making your prescribed number of bricks yesterday or today, as you did before?”
So the Israelite foremen went in and cried for help to Pharaoh: “Why are you treating your servants this way? No straw has been given to your servants, yet they say to us, ‘Make bricks!’ Look, your servants are being beaten, but it is your own people who are at fault.”
But he said, “You are slackers. Slackers! That is why you are saying, ‘Let us go sacrifice to the Lord.’ Now get to work. No straw will be given to you, but you must produce the same quantity of bricks.”
The Israelite foremen saw that they were in trouble when they were told, “You cannot reduce your daily quota of bricks.” When they left Pharaoh, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who stood waiting to meet them.
“May the Lord take note of you and judge,” they said to them, “because you have made us reek in front of Pharaoh and his officials — putting a sword in their hand to kill us!”
So Moses went back to the Lord and asked, “Lord, why have You caused trouble for this people? And why did You ever send me? Ever since I went in to Pharaoh to speak in Your name he has caused trouble for this people, and You haven’t delivered Your people at all.”​ But the Lord replied to Moses, “Now you are going to see what I will do to Pharaoh: he will let them go because of My strong hand; he will drive them out of his land because of My strong hand.”

Moses had an encounter with God and this gave him hope.

Aaron had met with God and was willing to commit to God.

The Israelite leaders just wanted to eat their food in peace.